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Education Report

Parents offer their insight

At B.C.'s first-ever Parent Congress, parents were given the chance to talk about what is working in their child's school and what could use improvement. Education Minister Shirley Bond encouraged parents to provide their vision for the future of education. Gatherings like this help fulfil government's commitment to communicate directly with B.C.'s education partners and seek their ideas for positive change. Read more.

Bond delivers opening remarks at the Parent Congress, held in Kelowna on Nov. 16.

Message from Minister Shirley Bond

Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Education

Earlier this month, Premier Campbell made a series of exciting education announcements.

The first was our Education Guarantee. While government works with industry to ensure that our students are poised to benefit from our booming economy, the job market can change quickly leaving some students without the best skill set they require to get ahead. Now, students who graduate without the skills and knowledge they need to succeed will be able to take K-12 courses, at no charge, through our new virtual school – LearnNow BC.

Also, starting in 2007, a Children's Education Credit of $1,000 will benefit every B.C. newborn. The program will cost about $41 million annually, but the money will grow in a trust during the student's early learning and K–12 years. It is likely to be more than double the original investment when students are ready for whatever further education they desire.

Finally, StrongStart Centres will promote early childhood learning in schools with available space, and at no cost to the parents and caregivers who visit with their preschool-aged children. There will be 16 StrongStart Centre pilot sites across British Columbia. Look for an announcement shortly detailing this exciting new initiative.

The Premier wants to give B.C. children and their families the tools they need to succeed.

HOT TOPIC

Premier Campbell is committed to helping protect students and all British Columbians from cancer, diabetes and the many other diseases linked to smoking and junk food.

That's why government will ban smoking indoors in all public places. For schools, the ban extends to all public and independent school property – indoor and out. The ban will start next September.

Here are the facts on smoking:

- every 13 seconds, someone dies of a related illness;
- more die from smoking than from accidents, alcohol, drugs, suicide, AIDS, and homicides combined;
- over 5,500 British Columbians die each year due to related illnesses;
- more than another 100 die from diseases brought on by second-hand smoke; and,
- smoking costs the B.C. economy over $2.5 billion each year.

With a ban on smoking on school grounds, B.C. students will enjoy a healthier school environment.

But smoking isn't the only unhealthy activity that B.C. youth grapple with: junk food has had an impact on their health. Over the last 25 years, the percentage of kids who are overweight has doubled and the percentage who are obese has tripled. Today, one in four B.C. children between the ages of two and seventeen is overweight or obese.

That's why starting next spring, new contracts with vendors in provincially owned public buildings – including schools – must be for healthy food. This supports our 2009 target for school districts to eliminate all unhealthy foods from vending machines. In fact, government is working to speed up that process.

The ban on smoking and junk food will help B.C. students and other British Columbians live well. The policies will also reduce pressures on the health care system, helping make that system sustainable for future generations, including today's K–12 students.

Reading Corner

Imagine living on a little island surrounded by the world's most infamous criminals. That's where 12-year-old Matthew "Moose" Flanagan finds himself when his father accepts a job on Alcatraz. A Newbery Honor Book, this title is suitable for students in grades 5–8.

Al Capone Does My Shirts
Gennifer Choldenko